GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6506
ANSWERED ON:09.05.2005
PHASING OUT OF MERCURY BASED EQUIPMENTS FROM HOSPITALS
Madhwaraj Smt. Manorama

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a shift towards mercury-free alternatives and strict regulations are in place globally but such safeguards and regulations for handling mercury does non-existent in India;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether a mercury thermometer containing 5 gms of mercury is enough to contaminate a 20-acre lake;

(d) if so, whether hospitals and dental clinics release substantial quantities of mercury every year without any precautions and dispose them of like general waste; and

(e) if so, the details of action plans formulated to phase out the mercury based equipments from hospitals?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a)&(b): Countries like Norway, Sweden, Denmark and some States of USA have policies restricting manufacture and sale of mercury based thermometers. In India, the effluent standards notified as well as the Hazardous Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 1989 as amended in 2003, under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, regulate disposal of mercury into the environment.

(c): The general effluent standard for discharge into inland surface water as notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 in respect of mercury is 0.01 milligram per liter.

(d)&(e): The mercury bearing wastes irrespective of the source of generation (i.e. hospitals, industries, etc.) containing mercury and mercury compounds equal to or more than 50 mg/kg are required to be disposed of as per the provisions of the Hazardous Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 1989 as amended in 2003.

The State Pollution Control Boards/Pollution Control Committees of Union Territories have been asked by the Central Pollution Control Board to ensure collection/disposal of mercury and mercury bearing wastes from the healthcare facilities as per the Hazardous Wastes (Management & Handling) Rules, 1989 as amended in 2003.